

## **RESERVOIR OPERATIONS / SHASTA DAM**

### **McCloud River Indians to Hold War Dance at Shasta Dam**

**News release, Winnemem Wintu tribe - 9/7/04**

REDDING - The Winnemem (McCloud River) Wintu Tribe have called for a "War Dance" to be held at Shasta Dam, north of Redding, California, beginning September 12th through September 16th. The tribe is alarmed by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's proposal to raise the dam because they lost much of their homelands, and their salmon, when the dam was first constructed. "Any raising of the dam, even a few feet, will flood some of our last remaining sacred sites on the McCloud River – sites we still use today," says Caleen Sisk – Franco, Winnemem Spiritual and Tribal Leader. "Village sites, burial grounds, and ceremonial grounds will all be lost forever," she continued.

The last time the Winnemem invoked the War Dance was in 1887 when a fish hatchery on the McCloud River was the enemy and protecting the salmon and the Wintu Winnemem way of life was the focus. One hundred seventeen years later the specter of Shasta Dam, already an implement of destruction to the Winnemem, looms large. Again, the Wintu Winnemem are under siege. "We prayed on it. On what it was we were supposed to do," about the raising of the dam "and we were told to hold a war dance," said Sisk - Franco. "Our ancestors showed the way with the dance against the fish hatchery...and this is the path that was shown to us. We gave up a lot of our homeland for the sake of the California people, and got nothing in return. Now you want to take our sacred places, and again we get nothing in return. How is this fair, over and over again?" "This is not right," she said. "This is too much to ask of a people."

On September 12, 2004 at a site near Shasta Dam, just before dusk, a sacred ceremonial fire will be lit, a drum will beat, a song will begin, the fast will start, and an ancient dance will be under way. For the next 4 days, the fire, the drum, the songs and the dance will carry the prayers of the Winnemem people. The dance is being held under a permit issued by The Bureau of Reclamation. (BOR) The Tribe has held several meetings with the BOR to raise questions about the feasibility of the BOR's plans, the impacts it will have on the tribe and their way of life, and the troubled history between the tribe and the BOR.

When Shasta Dam was first proposed, Congress passed a law authorizing the federal government to take the lands and burial grounds that the Winnemem had for a thousand years. Promises were made to the tribe that still have not been kept. The Tribe is asking that the BOR resolve these long standing debts before proceeding with its studies. The Tribe also wants the BOR, as part of the

ongoing CALFED process to increase water storage and meet California's growing thirst, to study alternatives to raising the dam such as better management practices for the existing reservoir and conservation options, as well as better protection of the fish populations. But the most important issue is the threat that raising the dam poses to the cultural resources along the McCloud River, sites that are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places as Traditional Cultural Properties.

At risk are burial grounds that include the victims of the massacre at Kaibai (Kî – bay) Creek, Puberty Rock, where the young women's coming of age ceremonies are held, and Children's Rock, where the young ones place their hands for blessings to make them good people and help them understand and magnify whatever special gifts they hold, said Mark Franco, Headman of the tribe's Kerekmet Village.

For more information about the history of the Winnemem, the 1887 war dance, the importance of the mc cloud river cultural sites and the current issues over the raising of Shasta dam, visit the Winnemem Wintu tribe web site at <http://www.winnememwintu.us>. #

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